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ABSTRACT

This paper explains the development of an integrated foreign language curriculum for elementary school classrooms and provides sample lesson plans using the story "Color, Where Are You?" In order to increase the consistency as well as the scope of the curriculum, the classroom teacher and the foreign language specialist should integrate the foreign language instruction into the classroom content so as to achieve some degree of parallel instruction. Such an approach provides "real" subject matter and materials to aid the pupils' advance to higher levels of reading, writing, and general application of the foreign language, and encourages pupils to see broader applications of the foreign language instruction to their daily lives. The rationale used to develop foreign language teaching units must take into account the natural whole context in which language is acquired as well as the apparent lag in foreign language acquisition when compared to the primary language. An appendix provides three sample lesson plans that form part of an instructional unit on colors. (MDM)

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FLESH OUT YOUR FLES PROGRAM:

Developmental Sequencing in Teaching Units

by

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FLES specialists, chronically in need of curriculum material, turn increasingly to the academic content of the regular classroom (Crandall and Tucker, 1990). At any grade level the core curriculum provides a rich and varied source of meaningful material and a touchstone to validate that material. In order to increase consistency as well as scope of the curriculum, the classroom teacher and the foreign language specialist should integrate the foreign language instruction into the classroom content so as to achieve some degree of parallel instruction. Such a partnership is ideal for achieving the maximum potential in a foreign language program. It helps provide "real" subject matter and materials to aid the pupils' advance to higher levels of reading, writing, and general application of the foreign language. It encourages pupils to see broader applications of the foreign language instruction to their daily lives. It facilitates articulating the foreign language curriculum with the regular classes. Some caution is required, however, when developing lesson plans for materials taken from a content area.

One risk that is apparent is the tendency to water down the instruction in the foreign language. This can be avoided if the classroom teacher first presents the subject at the appropriate grade level in English. The foreign language teacher may then focus on selected parts of the unit to review and reinforce in the target language. A second concern is to maintain the integrity of the instructional goals of the unit. For example, "Simplifying the vocabulary . . . should not result in concept simplification", p. 208). These concerns should not discourage the foreign language specialist from developing content units. Material can indeed be watered down and superficial when the foreign language teacher is attempting merely to add-on the language rather than internalize the language.

There is a lag in foreign language acquisition between learning the words and getting the music; a clue to the solution may lie in the developmental origins of language

itself. In language instruction this means that if you do not have the depth of feeling and understanding of the subject, the words are essentially meaningless and hollow. A way to flesh out the FLES program is to acknowledge this acquisition lag through cooperative development of teaching units by the classroom teacher and the foreign language.

The rationale used to develop foreign language teaching units must take into account the natural whole context in which language is acquired as well as the apparent lag in getting the "music" with the "words." The procedures described here sketch out a bare bones theoretical orientation based on the work of Piaget, then focus on one element of foreign language instruction which we call the Language Acquisition Gap (LAG), and suggest the type and timing of teaching unit applications.

Theoretical Orientation

For anyone attempting to read the works of Piaget there is a nearly overwhelming awareness that his descriptions often do not fall into neat categories nor do his terms lend themselves easily to definition. Piaget' s elegant theory basically states that we assimilate bits of information, compile and sort them, and then place the clustered information into a new or different organization (Flavell, 1963). One product of accomodation, the "schema," is basically an operational term related to an action and is independent of the various stages of development. Examples include "sucking" and "throwing." The development of these schemata is not dependent upon any particular stage of development, which means that they can be just as easily defined or developed during the formal operational stage as during the sensory-motor stage of learning. A label, such as "speaking" or "dancing," attached to a schema is the short-cut symbol of a whole set of discrete actions.

During the initial stage of sensory-motor activity the child's entire system is engaged in symbolic play, creative imagination, reproductive imagination, representative imitation, and intuition. These translate into operational activities through constructional

games and reflective imitation. External and internal activities also contribute to language symbols representing a thing or action. Piaget (1962) describes the process in which the external activity of ". . .imitation is linked with that of representation." (p. 5) which is internal. The logical extension of the internalized representation of objects and operations is that of accumulated symbols which make up language. And, not surprisingly, language is the symbolic representation of objects, schemata, and operations. Piaget powerfully describes the dynamics of images by noting that an image ". . . is the result of a construction akin to that which produces the schemata of intelligence. . . " (Piaget, 1962, p. 70). We are led to the next logical step in which the images and symbols of language are not merely add-ons but are an integrated and inseparable property of the whole person. The process of language acquisition begins during the earliest stages of the sensori-motor development and expands through formal operational thinking. However, since each image, symbol, and schema is the result of the accomodative process, each has a considerable set of actions, perceptions, and other elements which have gone into its creation. This raises a particularly difficult question: What is the process of symbol substitution? How might this affect foreign language acquisition?

Language Acquisition Gap

The hypothesis is that, without exploring symbolic denotation and symbolic connotation, rote memory function can easily allow for symbol substitution. With this, "hund," "hound," and "chien" are denotatively interchangeable. However, when dealing with connotative elements in which multiple clusters of meanings, emotional experiences, and physical associations are knotted together, the connections shift to internalized symbols and away from rote memory. During the regular classroom instruction the teacher, working toward concept development in the native language, calls upon the full range of the students' experiences and comprehension. In the foreign language class, however, the language symbols are "new" to the nervous system which provides little on

which the students can hang these symbols. This results in acquisition of the foreign language with its meaning and concepts lagging behind the native or primary language and concept development, a language acquisition gap (LAG).

While developmental lag refers to a slowness in the development of some physical or functional aspect of a child, LAG suggests a rather unique view of foreign language acquisition. There appears to be a significant difference between the "native" and "foreign" language acquisition. The development of the "native" language during the sensori-motor stage progresses from action to accumulated language symbols; the "foreign" language has been traditionally acquired by learning one set of language symbols that are then substituted for the native language symbols in such a way that the basic sensori-motor elements and basic images are not touched. More recent developments in foreign language teaching methods have tried to address this problem with a great deal of success. However, there still remains a fundamental gap between the two language types. This gap must be addressed when developing teaching units since the underlying schemata, images, symbols, experiences, and concepts which are available in the native language have not yet been developed in the foreign language.

Teaching Unit Applications

Foreign language learning occurs best when it is not the purpose of the instruction but rather incidental to the expression of the available energies. Teaching units should be designed to minimize these barriers to learning while taking advantage of the internalizing process. Each unit should to be designed to take advantage of the acquisition of new learning in various subject areas by capitalizing on the pupils' innate curiosity which originates from the sensori-motor stage. This energy is like a moving train on which the new foreign language can be loaded and the train and the cargo become one. In addition, the teaching design should to maintain motivation, involve the student physically and emotionally, and offer opportunities for challenge, success, discovery, and creativity.

Each unit should utilize more than one of the senses and more than one of the acquired skills. Touching and moving at younger ages, and singing and interacting at older ages are particularly powerful when associated with the language. In these ways the reduction of barriers through well- designed teaching units facilitate the acquisition and generalization of learning.

Ideally, each teaching unit should be developed with the classroom teacher so that the parallel content is maintained. This creates opportunities to generalize not only the language but also the concepts. With the teachers working together the continuity of material remains more or less constant and mutually reinforcing. Since the level of abstraction of the classroom material is already age-appropriate, there is the assumption that the concepts will not generally present barriers to the pupils' learning in the foreign language. We have learned, however, from Piaget and others, that language symbols get "meaty" only when they have some basic supporting images, schemata, and other elements. How does the teacher then develop the content concept when these language supports have not been acquired at the corresponding level in the foreign language?

The unit in which the concepts are developed in the native language should be presented in a manner or context consistent with the preceding developmental level in the foreign language. Even though the unit is introduced at a preceding developmental level, the concomitant activities practice the concept at the pupils' present age level. For example, a story to illustrate a science concept consistent with the concrete operational stage can be created to appeal to the pre- operational stage. However, the classroom activities are consistent with the age level. (See Appendix, Sample Lesson Plans.) The concept development is not weakened, but viewed from another perspective. While normal concept development proceeds in the regular classroom, the foreign language instruction uses that development to enhance the new language symbols. This will facilitate connections with materials and experiences already part of the student's

internalized and accomodated information.

In order to increase the efficiency of the academic process, it is reasonable to design teaching units and instructional plans that take advantage of the process of transfer of training. This means that skills acquired in one set of activities can be transferred in whole or in part to other similar activities. Thus, the art teacher may be instructing the principles of perspective, a skill useful to the science teacher trying to teach notions of planetary retrograde. In a foreign language class, shopping skills or concepts learned in home economics can be applied to similar skills and vocabulary in the foreign language. Another example for the third grade child might be classroom work with map skills and directionality which, in the FLES class could be transferred to locating places and compass points in the foreign language. In any event, the foreign language teaching unit is most effective when using age-appropriate content presented at a level which induces understanding.

In the FLES program at Filley, Nebraska, original materials and teaching units that appeal to appropriate acquisitional levels and which address the LAG have been developed. For example, in a science unit referred to above, the story appeals to the domain of magical thinking, which would approach closer the level of pupils' foreign language acquisition skills. The classroom teacher has already taught to the concrete operational level. Many of the units, furthermore, are structured to reflect a whole language perspective, an approach that places language elements in whole contexts. Whole language operates from the view that language has meaning when it is used to accomplish a purpose (Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores, 1987), and as such will always occur in a situation with a perceived valid purpose. The language itself is not the purpose; it is incidental to the purpose (Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores, 1987). This view adapts well to the content-based FLES program, where the purpose of the foreign language session is to serve as an extention of the regular subject matter from another perspective. The instruction just incidentally happens to be in

another language (Cutting, 1989). This approach is especially appropriate for foreign language instruction, because it parallels the way children learn their first language.

Secondly, since whole language develops content themes from whole contexts which range across the curriculum, the child is able to internalize the language in ways approximating schema development. For example, in the science unit the pupil colors the rainbow through a set of physical movements which parallels the movement of light through the prism to produce a rainbow. While the physical actions are occurring the colors are being labeled in the foreign language, integrating the process as a whole. This is consistent with the process of schema development where objects are assimilated to the activity as a whole. A further reason for using some features of whole language theory is that it provides a common ground for cooperation among elementary teachers in the system.

For each unit a story is created in the target language around a theme identified by the classroom teacher, and a Big Book for the text and illustrations is constructed. Individual lesson plans are developed for each page (or two) which are designed to be completed in one to two class sessions, and according to the following structure:

1. Concept: the teacher determines the vocabulary area or content related skill to be learned from the page.
2. Introduction: the teacher demonstrates the lesson, relates it to the concept and, from the big book, reads to the pupils the relevant part of the story.
3. Activities: the pupils apply the concept to appropriate activities that provide "whole contexts" for the new words or skill. Each pupil receives a copy of the page to read and color.
4. Shared language: as a culminating process, the teacher and children sum up and generalize the concept.

At this point in each unit a brief assessment of teacher/student performance is done according to the following four criteria:

1. Acquisition of new vocabulary and increased comprehension. Are the pupils able to understand and discuss in the target language topics covered in the unit?
2. Enhanced performance in other disciplines. How do the pupils' experiences in the foreign language class carry over into other disciplines?
3. Demonstration of newly acquired skills. Are the pupils able to read aloud and individually their copies of the story?
4. Teachers' subjective assessment of the pupils' motivation. Do the pupils maintain a strong interest in the foreign language class sessions?

This on-going evaluation is an important element in planning and presenting future units, as well as in modifying present instruction (Eggleton, 1990). Assessment procedures at this stage of unfolding FLES systems require flexibility and a forgiving structure. As more programs are developed and tested, better questions are expected to emerge. There is an ongoing effort to develop instruments to assess proficiency at the elementary level (Met, 1991) but at this time much research is still needed to evaluate pupils' progress in FLES programs.

In addition to assessing teacher/student performances, the FLES program itself and its relationship to the school curriculum needs to be evaluated in such a way as to provide documentation for accountability purposes. It will also serve as a basis for change, continuation and growth of the program. This need has been addressed by the development of the FLES Program Evaluation Inventory (FPEI). This inventory seeks input from teachers, students, administrators, and parents, and results in a global community program rating instrument (Heining-Boynton, 1990).

Conclusion

A FLES instructional system has been developed in which the core curriculum is a source of material and a touchstone to validate that material. The foreign language specialist and classroom teacher form a partnership which is ideal for maximizing potential FLES instruction. The design of the units and the context in which the material is applied attempt to overcome difficulties encountered earlier. Hopefully, this approach facilitates internalizing the material rather than adding to general native language skills, and overcomes the lag between surface elements and internalizing whole meaning.

The theoretical support derives basically from an extention of the work of Piaget and draws on his recognition of the process for the development of language symbols. These symbols, which have developed from the process of internal representation of objects and operations, are both sustained by and are frequently labeled as schemata. Thus, the skeleton for language includes actions leading to internalization of symbolic representations which, in turn, play a major role in forming the whole person. In developing teaching units, the instructor should take advantage of the internalizing process by involving the pupil as a whole: physically, cognitively, and emotionally. The language skeleton is thus fleshed out when the units take advantage of the pupils' innate curiosity and available energies, and when the purpose of the instruction becomes language expression rather than language instruction. The instructional mission is achieved when the teaching units appeal to those appropriate acquisitional levels and internalize of the essential qualities of the foreign language.

APPENDIX: Sample Lesson Plans

The general design of each instructional unit, given in the target language, consists of a story and supporting lesson plans. The story communicates the instructional concept. Lesson plans, designed for each session, include activities, the accumulation of story pages and vocabulary word cards, and shared language. The teacher works from a big book version of the story, presenting it in increments of a page or two for each session. The pupils discuss the text, then move to activities that provide contexts for the new words and content-related concepts. Following the activity each pupil receives a copy of the story page to read and color. (At the end of the unit the accumulated story pages are gathered into a book which is bound and given to the child to keep.) Each lesson closes with shared language, related culminating activities in which the pupils share what they have learned. One activity scheduled for every other lesson involves receiving materials for a "word ring", a set of 1" by 4" cards with a hole punched at the left margin for insertion onto a holding ring. On each card is printed one word of the newly acquired vocabulary. These cards are color coded for noun gender and parts of speech. By the end of the unit the pupils have accumulated word cards which they can manipulate to practice the new vocabulary.

The following lesson plans are representative pages from a teaching unit in science which presumes a level of language skills beyond the first year or two. The story, Color, Where are You?, is 15 pages in length, each page containing a large illustration and one or two lines of text. The original text is in the target language, but for purposes of this paper, is presented in English. The story was devised in response to the classroom teacher's request for reinforcement of the concept of light refraction. It is targeted for fourth and fifth grade levels in which the pupils are expected to be well into concrete operational thinking. Recognizing the language acquisitional gap, the story has been designed in such a way as to appeal to preoperational thinking, even magical thinking. The activities,

however, reinforce the science concept at the appropriate concrete operational level, touching as well on other areas of the curriculum.

The story line deals simply with light bulb characters of different sizes and shapes symbolizing wavelengths of the color spectrum. One by one the colored bulbs step forward on a stage and are presented to the readers as unique characters. Following the presentation the color characters are tossed together in a box (prism) where they lose their individual differences and become white light. Workers try various means to help the individual colors exit the box, succeeding only when they make windows which conform to the individual size (wavelength) of each color character. As the colors exit they form an rainbow arc. At the end of the story children learn that each small water drop can be a color box (prism). Sample lesson plans follow.

LESSON: VI THEME: RAINBOW COLORS

The color characters have been introduced individually on a stage, and now stand together receiving applause.

CONCEPT:

Self-concept development, accepting differences [Social Studies]

INTRODUCTION:

Teacher models own eye color. Asks for eye colors of various pupils.

Teacher models own hair color. Asks for hair colors of pupils.

Teacher models own skin color and asks for that of pupils.

Teacher asks for pupils' favorite color.

Teacher asks pupils' for colors of their favorite foods.

Teacher reads to pupils aloud unit story Color, Where are You? this time adding the latest pages referred to above where color characters receive applause.

ACTIVITY:

Pupils make individual rainbows. (The empty sections of the picture of a rainbow are each labeled and colored appropriately, such as eye color, skin color, favorite color, etc.)

Pupils receive and color new story pages covered in this lesson.

SHARED LANGUAGE:

Each pupil reports on his/her eye color/hair color/skin color to class, or cooperative learning group.

Others respond, "You are so beautiful." and "I like you."

Pupils receive latest cards for word ring (manipulative vocabulary).

LESSON: VIII THEME: RAINBOW COLORS

The color characters have been mixed together in the box (prism). Workers using various tools are trying to get them out.

CONCEPT:

Science of mechanics and work [Social Studies].

INTRODUCTION:

Discuss and demonstrate tools and what work they do.

Ask what sounds each makes (loud/quiet).

Ask, "Where are the colors?" Hold up sack of crayons. Say, "There they are. Take out the red crayon." Teacher takes out red crayon. "Take out the blue." Teacher takes out blue crayon.

Teacher reads to pupils aloud unit story Color, Where are You?, this time adding the latest pages referred to above where the workers are trying to get the colors out of the box.

ACTIVITY:

Hold up sack of crayons again. Go to pupils. Say, "Take out red/blue." Pupil takes out appropriate crayon.

Pupils receive and color new story pages covered in this lesson.

SHARED LANGUAGE:

Pupils pass bag to each other asking the next person to take out a certain color.

Make rainbow name: pupils write each letter of their names with the colors of the rainbow in sequence. Keep in packet.

LESSON X : THEME: RAINBOW COLORS

Workers make windows of the appropriate size for each color. The color characters exit at the same time, and in so doing create a rainbow.

CONCEPT:

Demonstrate the spectrum [Science]

INTRODUCTION:

Review weather vocabulary.

Shine a beam of light on the prism to create a rainbow (use flashlight, or filmstrip projector). Say, "The colors are coming through their windows from the white light. We are making a rainbow."

Teacher reads to pupils aloud unit story Color, Where are You?, this time adding the latest pages referred to in this lesson where the characters exit the prism, creating a rainbow.

ACTIVITY:

Set up activity centers:

1. Hold prism to eyes to see rainbow colors outlining objects in the room.
2. Place a small mirror in a glass of water with mirror tilted against the glass.
3. Observe how a drop of oil on water produces colors.
4. Blow bubbles from commercial preparation. See colors on bubbles.

Pupils receive and color new story pages covered in this lesson.

SHARED LANGUAGE:

Receive word cards for word ring. (manipulative vocabulary).

Write in journals what activity worked and what didn't.

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